(b) The Govt. is implementing various Centrally Sponsored Programmes *viz* National Food Security Mission, Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojna, National Horticulture Mission, Macro Management of Agriculture, Integrated Nutrient and Pest Management, Support to Agriculture Extension Services, Prime Minister's Rehabilitation Package (in six districts of Vidarbha *viz* Akola, Amrawati, Buldana, Wardha, Yavatmal and Washim), Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP), National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme (NREGP) etc. to improve agricultural production and create adequate employment opportunities.

(c) The farmers of Bundelkhand are already covered under "Agricultural Debt Waiver & Agricultural Debt Relief Scheme, 2008" of Union Government.

(d) The Government has recently approved a special Bundelkhand Drought Mitigation Package of Rs.7266.00 crore comprising Rs. 3506.00 crore for Uttar Pradesh and Rs. 3760.00 crore for Madhya Pradesh to be implemented over a period of three years.

Bribe given to officials of Central Insecticides Board

2464. SHRI AMAR SINGH: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that DE-Noal Corp Protection (Ltd.) which is a subsidiary of Dow Chemicals paid bribe to the extent of $39,700 to an official of Central Insecticides Board to expedite registration of three products of the company;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the names of such officials to whom bribe was paid; and

(d) the action Government has taken against them?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI K.V. THOMAS): (a) to (d) Following reports in connection with the proceedings taken up by the Securities and Exchange Commission of United States of America that DE-Nocil, a subsidiary company of Dow Chemicals, had made improper payments to a member of Registration Committee constituted under the Insecticidies Act, 1968, for expeditious registration of three of its products, an inquiry was ordered into the matter and a case has been registered by the Central Bureau of Investigation against Dr. R.L. Rajak, the then Plant Protection Adviser, and some private persons and companies.

Steps to increase wheat production

2465. DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether to compensate the losses of paddy output Government is now going to increase the country's wheat production to a record 84 million tonnes in 2009-10 season;

(b) if so, whether there are plans to achieve this by raising average per hectare wheat yield to 3 tonnes as against earlier average of 2.8 tonnes and also increasing the area under wheat to 28 million hectares as against last years' acreage of 27.5 million hectares;

(c) whether country produced an alltime high 80.58 million tonnes wheat in 2008-09; and

(d) if so, to what extent these plans have borne fruits?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI K.V. THOMAS): (a) to (d) Government has taken several steps to tackle the impending situation to increase the area under rabi cultivation to compensate for likely losses in kharif 2009-10.

During National Conference on Agriculture for Rabi Campaign, 2009, it was agreed by all the States to increase the area under wheat for enhancing the production & productivity, thereby compensating the losses of kharif, 2009. Seed subsidy has been increased for wheat crop from Rs.500/- to Rs.700/- per quintal for Rabi 2009-10 season. State Government have given flexibility to utilize the funds under various Centrally Sponsored Schemes and age limit norms of certified seed of wheat varieties have been relaxed. Additional allocations of rust-resistant and terminal heat-tolerant varieties of wheat minikits have been made. Availability and supply of essential inputs such as fertilizers, additional power for irrigation etc. have been ensured in coordination with the States and various Central Ministries.

Sowing of Wheat is in progress in all the wheat growing states of the country. The area coverage of wheat reported as on 3.12.2009 was about 167.20 lakh hectares against coverage of 162.40 lakh hectares during corresponding period of last year. Regarding the production of wheat in the current year, it is too early to assess the estimate at this stage. There is record production of wheat during 2008-09 to the tune of 80.58 million tonnes (as per 4th estimates).

Strategies to check suicide by farmers

2466. SHRI ISHWAR SINGH: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that the incidents of suicide by farmers continue to increase in various parts of the country inspite of financial assistance provided to States to check such cases;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the assistance provided to State Governments to check incidents of suicides in various parts of the country are monitored by the Central Government; and

(d) if so, the strategies formulated to check rising cases of suicides by farmers in the country?